

## Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences

### Outfitter Guide Project, Tonto National Forest

### Wildlife, Fish, and Plant Resources

#### Affected Environment:

The Tonto National Forest (Forest) comprises almost three million acres of diverse landscape located below the Mogollon Rim in Central Arizona. Elevations on the forest range from as low as 1,300 feet to 7,900 feet. Vegetation types within the forest vary widely and may include: lower Sonoran Desert scrub, mixed broadleaf deciduous riparian forest, upland Sonoran Desert scrub, Sonoran Desert grassland, juniper woodland/grassland, cottonwood willow deciduous riparian forest, interior chaparral, ponderosa pine/ oak forest, mixed conifer forest, and sub alpine/mixed conifer forest. The forest provides wildlife and fish habitat for several hundred vertebrate species, which include white tailed deer, mule deer, elk, and cottontail rabbit, many reptile species, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, javelina, various bat species, an enormous assemblage of bird species, sixteen native fish species and twenty-eight non-native fish species. The forest contains habitat and some populations for sixteen threatened or endangered species, six candidate species, and fifty-eight forest sensitive species which include twenty two plants, three invertebrates, five fish, four amphibians, five reptiles, nine birds, and ten mammals (see table 1). Threatened, endangered, candidate and forest sensitive species and critical habitats (designated and proposed) which were evaluated are listed in table 1. Determinations by alternative and brief rationales are also provided in table 1. For species accounts and occurrence records forestwide, see the species account section of the Biological Evaluation.

The entire forest will be administratively affected by the proposed action, that is, all management areas identified in the Tonto National Forest Land Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Effects to threatened endangered, candidate, or forest sensitive species and their habitats (including designated and proposed critical habitats) are not expected upon implementation of the proposed action because the action is strictly administrative in nature and no ground disturbing actions are proposed.

**Table 1. Threatened, endangered and Forest Sensitive Species / Critical Habitats Evaluated and Determination by Alternative with rationales.**

Species/Critical Habitat	Federal/ Forest Status	Determination and Rationale for Alternatives	
		No Action – Alt 1	Action – Alt 2
Federally-listed Species			
Bat, lesser long-nosed	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Flycatcher, southwestern willow	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Flycatcher, southwestern willow, critical habitat, proposed	D	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Owl, Mexican spotted	T	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Owl, Mexican spotted, critical habitat	D	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Rail, Yuma clapper	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Frog, Chiricahua leopard frog	T	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR

Species/Critical Habitat	Federal/ Forest Status	Determination and Rationale for Alternatives	
		No Action – Alt 1	Action – Alt 2
Frog, Chiricahua leopard, critical habitat	N/A	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Chub, Gila	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Chub, Gila, critical habitat	D	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Minnow, loach	T	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Minnow, loach, critical habitat	D	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Pikeminnow, Colorado	E-ENE	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Pupfish, desert	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Spikedace	T	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Spikedace, critical habitat	D	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sucker, razorback	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sucker, razorback, critical habitat	D	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Topminnow, Gila	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Trout, Gila	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Woundfin	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Cliffrose, Arizona	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Hedgehog, Arizona	E	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
<b>Forest Sensitive Species</b>			
Bat, Allen's lappet-browed	S /C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bat, California leaf-nosed	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bat, greater western mastiff	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bat, pale Townsend's big-eared	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bat, pocketed free-tailed	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bat, spotted	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bat, western red	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Coati, white-nosed	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sheep, desert bighorn	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sheep, rocky mountain bighorn	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Blackhawk, common	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Cuckoo, western yellow-billed	S /C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Eagle, bald	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Falcon, American peregrine	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Goshawk, northern	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Grebe, Clark's	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Hawk, northern gray	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Hawk, zone-tailed	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR

Species/Critical Habitat	Federal/ Forest Status	Determination and Rationale for Alternatives	
		No Action – Alt 1	Action – Alt 2
Towhee, Abert's	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Gartersnake, northern Mexican	S /C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Gartersnake, Narrow-headed	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Monster, reticulate Gila monster	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Snake, Maricopa leaf-nosed	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Tortoise, Morafka's desert	S / C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Frog, lowland leopard	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Frog, northern leopard	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Frog, western barking	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Toad, Arizona	S /C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Chub, headwater	S /C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Chub, roundtail	S /C	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Dace, longfin	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sucker, desert	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sucker, Sonora	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Beetle, Parker's cylloepus riffle	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Midge, netwing	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Springsnail, fossil	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Agave, Hohokam	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Agave, Tonto Basin	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Buckwheat, Ripley wild	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Bugbane, Arizona	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Dock, Blumer's	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Fleabane, Fish Creek	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Fleabane, Mogollon	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Groundsel, Toumey	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Mallow, Pima Indian	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Milkwort, Hualapai	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Phlox, Arizona	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Rockdaisy, Fish Creek	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Rockdaisy, Salt River	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Root, Arizona alum	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Root, Eastwood alum	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sage, Galiuro	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sandwort, Mt. Dellenbaugh	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR

Species/Critical Habitat	Federal/ Forest Status	Determination and Rationale for Alternatives	
		No Action – Alt 1	Action – Alt 2
Sedge, Chihuahuan	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Sedge, Cochise	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Snapdragon, mapleleaf false	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Vetch, horseshoe deer	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
Woodfern, Aravaipa	S	NE: NA	NE: NLSTR
<b>Key:</b>	<p><b>NLSTR</b> – Action is not likely to produce potential stressors or subsidies that would reasonably be expected to act directly on individual organisms or to have direct or indirect consequences (positive or negative) on the environment; <b>NA</b> – no action will occur;</p> <p><b>NE</b> – no effect</p> <p><b>T</b>- Threatened Species under the <i>Endangered Species Act of 1973</i> (as amended)</p> <p><b>E</b>- <i>Endangered Species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973</i> (as amended)</p> <p><b>S</b>- Forest Sensitive Species (Regional Forester’s list of Sensitive Species, Region 3, USFS)</p> <p><b>D</b>- Designated “Critical Habitat”</p> <p><b>N/A</b>- Proposed Critical Habitat, but not yet designated.</p> <p><b>E-ENE</b>- Endangered under the <i>Endangered Species Act of 1973</i>, but designated as an experimental non – essential species.</p> <p><b>S/C</b>- Forest Sensitive Species list and also a “Candidate” Species designated by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Protected status is warranted, but precluded by higher priorities. Species will likely be listed as threatened or endangered in the future.</p>		

## Outfitter Guide Project Alternatives

### Alternative 1 -No Action

Under the No Action alternative, priority permits would not be issued. Outfitter-guide service day allocations in the Tonto National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), as amended, would remain the same. A Total Service Day pool would not be established. Outfitter-guide administration would not be in compliance with Forest Service policy.

### Alternative 2- The Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action alternative, a Total Service Day allocation for outfitter-guides by activity-type and Forest Plan management area would be established as shown in Table 1 (see Environmental Assessment). The allocation for the number of permits by activity-type and management area and the maximum number of service days by activity type and management area would be removed from the Forest Plan allocation for outfitter-guide service days (unless otherwise noted). The Forest Plan would be amended for each management area.

Priority (up to ten year) outfitter-guide permits would be issued to existing long-term temporary permit holders in accordance with Forest Service policy. Within the next five years, priority permits may also be issued for new uses within the Total Service Day Allocation by activity type and management area. Priority use would only be authorized on existing roads and trails used by outfitter-guides and the general public, and in areas (e.g., designated camp sites) historically used by outfitter-guides. Priority use would not be authorized on user-created routes or in areas not historically used by outfitter-guides. Assignment of priority use is at the discretion of the authorized officer and is subject to review and adjustment each year.

## **Environmental Consequences**

### **Alternative 1 – *No Action***

#### **Direct Effects:**

No direct effects to wildlife, fish and plants on the Tonto NF are expected under the No Action alternative. Management of outfitter-guide permits would remain the same.

#### **Indirect Effects:**

Indirect effects to wildlife, fish, and plants may occur from an increase in unauthorized outfitter-guide use, due to the inability to issue priority permits to qualified outfitter-guides. Unauthorized outfitter-guides are not subject to permit requirements designed to mitigate impacts to wildlife, fish, and plants.

### **Alternative 2- *The Proposed Action***

#### **Direct Effects:**

No direct or indirect effects from implementation of the proposed action on wildlife, fish, and plants are expected to occur. Since Total Service Day allocation for outfitter-guides by activity type and Forest Plan management area would not exceed current service day allocations, no additional use would occur under the proposed action. The issuance of any permits for priority use would not cause ground disturbance, because the use would occur on designated roads and trails and in areas already authorized for priority outfitter-guide use. Threatened, endangered, candidate and forest sensitive species and their habitats (including designated/proposed critical habitats) evaluated, will not be affected by implementation of the outfitter-guide project.

Issuing priority permits to qualified outfitter-guides will allow the agency to include permit requirements to help mitigate impacts to wildlife, fish and plants.

#### **Indirect Effects:**

Indirect effects from implementation of the proposed action on wildlife and fish resources are not expected.

#### **Cumulative Effects:**

Past, present, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable future activities that may affect wildlife and fish resources on the forest may include fuels' reduction projects, forest thinning, watershed improvement projects, recreation management, reauthorization of livestock grazing allotments, lands special use permits (new issuances and maintenance on existing structures), personal use activities, road maintenance, power transmission line maintenance, and new road construction. While these activities can directly and indirectly affect wildlife species, as well as cause

destruction or modification to wildlife and plant habitat, these actions are planned to minimize (and when possible, eliminate) effects to species and their habitat above current conditions and have mitigation measures and Best Management Practices designed to mitigate disturbance that may occur from project implementation.

The implementation of the proposed action is not expected to result in any addition to current cumulative effects, which may have already occurred due to ongoing management of the outfitter-guide program. The proposed action is strictly administrative and Total Service Days Allocated within each management area would not increase from current levels; therefore, no cumulative effects are expected from implementation of the proposed action.